

NEW YORK IN 1750.

The Rev. Mr. Burnaby, who visited this city about the year 1748, says:—"The inhabitants of New York, in their character, very much resemble the Pennsylvanians. More than half of them are Dutch, and almost all traders. They are therefore habitually frugal, industrious and parsimonious. Being, however, of different nations, different languages and different religions, it is almost impossible to give them any precise or determinate character. The women are handsome and agreeable, though rather more reserved than the Philadelphia ladies. The amusements are balls and sleighing expeditions in the winter, and in the summer going in parties upon the water and fishing, or making excursions in the country. There are several houses, pleasantly situated up the East River, near New York, where it is common to have turtle feasts. These happen once or twice in a week. Thirty or forty gentlemen and ladies, meet and dine together, drink tea in the afternoon, fish and amuse themselves till evening, and then return home in Italian chaises, (the fashionable carriage in this and most parts of America, Virginia excepted, where they chiefly make use of coaches, and these commonly drawn by six horses,) a gentleman and lady in each chaise."

The following is the description given of this city in the year 1756, by Mr. Smith, the historian:—"The city of New York consists of about two thousands five hundred buildings. It is a mile in length, and not above half that in breadth. Such it is figure, its centre of business, and the situation of the houses, that the mean cartage from one part to another does not exceed above one-quarter of a mile, than which nothing can be more advantageous to a trading city."

"It is thought to be as healthy a spot as any in the world. The east and south parts in general are low, but the rest is situated on a dry, elevated soil. The streets are irregular, but being paved with round pebbles, are clean, and lined with well-built brick houses, many of which are covered with tiled roofs."

"No part of America is supplied with markets abounding with greater plenty and variety. We have beef, pork, mutton, poultry, butter, wild fowl, venison, fish, roots and herbs of all kinds in their seasons. Our oysters are a considerable article in the support of the poor. Their beds are within view of the town. A fleet of two hundred small craft are often seen there at a time, when the weather is mild in winter; and this single article is computed to be worth annually ten or twelve thousand pounds."

"This city is the metropolis, and grand mart of the province, and, by its commodious situation, commands also all the trade of the western part of Connecticut and that of New Jersey. No season prevents our ships from launching out into the ocean. During the severity of the winter, an equal, unrestrained activity runs through all ranks, orders and employments."

"Upon the south-west point of the city stands the fort, which is a square, with four bastions. Within the walls is the house in which our governors usually reside, and opposite to it brick barracks, built formerly for the independent companies. The governor's house is, in height, three stories, and fronts to the west, having from the second story, a fine prospect of the bay and Jersey shore. At the south end there was formerly a chapel, but this was burnt down in the negro conspiracy of the spring of 1741. Accordingly to Governor Burnet's observation, this fort stands in the latitude of 42 degrees 42 minutes."

"Below the walls of the garrison, near the water, we have lately raised a line of fortifications, which commands the entrance into the eastern road and the mouth of Hudson's River. This battery is built of stone, and the merlons consist of cedar joists filled in with earth. It mounts ninety-two cannon, and these are all the works we have to defend us. About six furlongs south-east of the fort lies Nutten Island, containing about one hundred or one hundred and twenty acres, reserved by an act of assembly as a sort of demesne for the governors, upon which it is proposed to erect a strong castle, because an enemy might from thence easily bombard the city, without being annoyed either by our battery or the fort. During the late war a line of palisades was run from Hudson's to the East River at the other end of the city, with block houses at small distances. The greater part of these still remain as a monument of our folly, which cost the government about eight thousand pounds."

"The inhabitants of New York are a mixed people, but mostly descended from the original Dutch planters. There are two churches in which religious worship is performed in that language. The old building (Garden-street Church) is of stone, and ill built, ornamented within by a small organ loft and brass branches. The new church (the present post-office) is a very heavy edifice, has a very extensive area, and was completed in 1729. It has no galleries, and yet will perhaps contain a thousand or twelve hundred auditors. The steeple of this church affords a most beautiful prospect, both of the city beneath, and of the surrounding country. The Dutch congregation is more numerous than any other; but, as the language becomes disused, it is much diminished; and unless they change their worship into the English tongue, must soon suffer a total dissipation. They have at present two ministers, the Reverend Messrs. Ritzma and De Ronde, who are strict Calvinists. Their church was incorporated on the 11th of May, 1696, by the name of the minister, elders and deacons of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the city of New York; and its estate, after the expiration of sundry long leases, will be worth a very great income."

"There are besides the Dutch, two Episcopal churches in this city, upon the plan of the established church in South Britain. Trinity Church was built in 1696, and afterward enlarged in 1737. It stands very pleasantly upon the banks of Hudson's River, and has a large cemetery on each side, inclosed in front by a painted pale fence. Before it a long walk is railed off from the Broadway, the pleasantest street of any in the whole town. This building is about one hundred and forty-eight feet long, including the tower and chancel, and seventy-two feet in breadth. The steeple is one hundred and seventy-five feet in height. The church within is ornamented beyond any other place of public worship among us. The head of the chancel is ornamented with an altar-piece, and opposite to it, at the other end of the building, is the organ. The tops of the pillars, which support the galleries, are decked with gilt busts of angels, winged. From the ceiling are suspended two glass branches, and on the walls hang the arms of its principal benefactors. The aisles are paved with flat stones. The present rector of this church is the Rev. Henry Barclay, formerly a missionary among the Mohawks, who receives one hundred pounds a year, levied upon all the other clergy and laity in the city, by virtue of an act of assembly, procured by Governor Fletcher. He is assisted by Dr. Johnson and Mr. Auchmuty."

"This congregation, partly by the arrival of strangers, but principally by proselytes from the Dutch churches, is become so numerous that, though the old building will contain two thousand hearers, yet a new one was erected in 1752. This, called St. George's Chapel, is a very great edifice, faced with hewn stone and tiled; the steeple is lofty but irregular, and its situation in a new, crowded and ill built part of the town."

"The revenue of Trinity Church is restricted, by an act of Assembly, to five hundred pounds per annum; but it is possessed of a real estate at the north end of the town, which having been lately divided into lots, and let to farm, will, in a few years, produce a much greater income."

"The Presbyterians, increasing after Lord Cornbury's return to England, called Mr. Anderson, a Scotch minister, to the pastoral charge of their congregation. And Dr. John Nicol, Patrick Macknight, Gilbert Livingston and Thomas Smith, purchased a piece of ground and founded a

church in 1719. Two years afterward they petitioned Colonel Schnyler, who had then the chief command, for a charter of incorporation to secure their estate for religious worship, upon the plan of the Church of North Britain; but were disappointed in their expectations through the opposition of the Episcopal party. After several years' solicitation for a charter, in vain, and fearful that those who obstructed such a reasonable request, would watch an opportunity to give them a more effectual wound, those among the Presbyterians who were invested with the fee simple of the church and ground, conveyed it, on the 16th of March, 1730, to a committee of the Church of Scotland. This Committee gave the Presbyterian inhabitants of New-York a right to pursue religious worship in the church. Mr. Anderson was succeeded, April, 1727, by the Rev. Ebenezer Hember-ton, a man of polite breeding, pure morals, and warm devotion, under whose labors the congregation greatly increased, and were enabled to raise a new edifice in 1748. This was built of stone, and railed off from the street. It was in length eighty feet, and in breadth sixty. The steeple raised on the south-west end is, in height, one hundred and forty-five feet."

"The Jews, who are not inconsiderable for their numbers, worship in a synagogue, erected in a very private part of the town, plain without but very neat within."

"English is the most prevailing language among us, but not a little corrupted by the Dutch dialect, which is still so much used in some counties, that the sheriffs find it difficult to obtain persons sufficiently acquainted with the English tongue, to serve as jurors in the courts of law."

"In the city of New York, through our intercourse with the English, we follow the London fashions; though by the time we adopt them, they become disused in England. Our affluence during the late war, introduced a degree of luxury in tables, dress and furniture, with which we were before unacquainted. But still we are not so gay a people as our neighbors, at Boston, and several of the southern colonies. The Dutch counties, in some measure, follow the example of New York, but still retain many modes peculiar to Hollanders."

"The city of New York consists principally of merchants, shop-keepers and tradesmen, who sustain the reputation of honest, punctual and fair dealers. With respect to riches, there is not so great an inequality among us, as is common in Boston and some other places. Every man of industry and integrity has it in his power to live well, and many are the instances of persons who came here distressed by their poverty, who now enjoy easy and plentiful fortunes."

"New York is one of the most social places on the continent. The men collect themselves into weekly evening clubs. The ladies, in winter, are frequently entertained, either at concerts of music or assemblies, and make a very good appearance. They are comely and dress well, and scarce any of them have distorted shapes. Tinctured with a Dutch education, they manage their families with becoming parsimony, good providence, and singular neatness. The practice of extravagant gaming, common to the fashionable part of the fair sex in some places, is a vice with which my country-women cannot justly be charged. There is nothing they so generally neglect as reading, and indeed all the arts for the improvement of the mind, in which, it must be confessed, the men have set them an example."

"The people, both in town and country, are sober, industrious and hospitable, though intent upon gain. The richer sort keep very plentiful tables, abounding with great varieties of fish, flesh, fowl and all kinds of vegetables. The common drinks are beer, cider, weak punch and Madeira wine; for dessert we have fruits in vast plenty, of different kinds and various species."

"The inhabitants are, in general, healthy and robust, taller, but shorter-lived than Europeans, and both with respect to their minds and bodies, arrive sooner to an age of maturity. Breathing a serene, dry air, they are more sprightly in their natural tempers than the people of England; and hence instances of suicide here are very uncommon. The situation of New York, with respect to trade, is very advantageous; but our merchants are compared to a hive of bees, who industriously gather honey for others—*non vobis mellificatis apes*—for the profits of our trade centre chiefly in Great Britain; and for that reason, methinks, among others, we ought always to receive the generous aid and protection of our mother country. Our importation of dry goods, from England, is so vastly great that we are obliged to betake ourselves to all possible arts to make remittances to the British merchants. It is for this purpose we import cotton from St. Thomas and Surinam, lime juice and Nicaragua wood from Curacao, and logwood from the bay, etc.; and yet it drains us of all the gold and silver we can collect. It is computed that the annual amount of the goods purchased by this colony, in Great Britain, is in value not less than one hundred thousand pounds sterling; and the sum would be much greater if a stop was put to all clandestine trade. The item of tea is a very important one, as our people, both in town and country, are shamefully gone into the habit of tea-drinking; and it is supposed we consume, of this commodity, in value near ten thousand pounds sterling per annum."

"The money used is silver, gold, British half-pence and bills of credit. Twelve half-pence, till lately, passed for a shilling; which, being much beyond their value in any of the neighboring colonies, a set of gentlemen, seventy-two in number, on the 22d of December, 1753, subscribed a paper engaging not to receive or pass them except at the rate of fourteen coppers to a shilling. This gave rise to a mob, for a few days, among the lower class of people; but some of them being imprisoned, the scheme was carried into execution, and established in every part of the province."

Valentine's History of the City of New York.